In the claims:

1-19.   (Cancelled)

20.   (New) A load-sharing multi-homed firewall array comprising:

an array of firewall machines coupled in parallel with an IP-compliant network;

wherein each of the firewall machines of the array comprising:

a first and second set of virtual hosts, said first set of virtual hosts configured to interface an associated firewall machine with said IP-compliant network and said second set of virtual hosts configured to interface an associated firewall machine with a private network;

DNS functionality associated with each of firewall machines of the array;

a master configuration file associated with each of the firewall machines; and

wherein an ensuing connection request is mapped to the first firewall machine of the array to respond to a DNS request associated with said ensuing connection request.

21.   (New) The load-sharing multi-homed firewall array of claim 20, wherein a connection request received from the IP-compliant network is mapped to said first set of virtual hosts on the first firewall machine of the array to respond to a DNS request.

22.   (New) The load-sharing multi-homed firewall array of claim 20, wherein a connection request received from the private network is mapped to said second set of virtual hosts on the first firewall machine of the array to respond to a DNS request.

23.   (New) The load-sharing multi-homed firewall array of claim 20, wherein each of said firewall machines further comprises a special-purpose virtual host including an HTML-based configuration module for updating said master configuration files over said IP-compliant network.

24.   (New) The load-sharing multi-homed firewall array of claim 23, wherein each of said firewall machines includes N + 1 sets of virtual hosts.

25.   (New) A load-sharing multi-homed firewall array comprising:

means for coupling a plurality of firewall means in parallel with an IP-compliant network;

wherein each of said firewall means comprising:

a first set of virtual host means interfacing an associated firewall means with said IP-compliant network and said second set of virtual host means interfacing an associated firewall means with a private network;

means for providing DNS functionality associated with each of firewall means;

master configuration means associated with each of the firewall machines; and

means for mapping an ensuing connection request to the first firewall means to respond to a DNS request associated with said ensuing connection request.

26.   (New) The load-sharing multi-homed firewall array of claim 25, further comprising means for mapping a connection request received from the IP-compliant network to said first set of virtual host means on the first firewall means to respond to a DNS request.

27.   (New) The load-sharing multi-homed firewall array of claim 25, further comprising means for mapping a connection request received from the private network to said second set of virtual host means on the first firewall means to respond to a DNS request.

28.   (New) The load-sharing multi-homed firewall array of claim 25, further comprising HTML-based configuration means for updating said master configuration means over said IP-compliant network.

29.   (New) The load-sharing multi-homed firewall array of claim 28, wherein each of said firewall means includes N + 1 sets of virtual host means.

30.   (New) A load-sharing multi-homed firewall array comprising:

an array of firewall machines coupled in a parallel with an IP-compliant network;

wherein each of the firewall machines of the array comprising:

at least a first and second set of virtual hosts, said first set of virtual hosts configured to interface an associated firewall machine with said IP-compliant network

and said second set of virtual hosts configured to interface an associated firewall machine with a private network;

DNS functionality associated with each of firewall machines of the array;

a master configuration file associated with each of the firewall machines;

a special-purpose virtual host including an HTML-based configuration module for updating said master configuration files over said IP-compliant network; and

wherein an ensuing connection request is mapped to the first firewall machine of the array to respond to a DNS request associated with said ensuing connection request.

31.   (New) The load-sharing multi-homed firewall array of claim 30, wherein a connection request received from the IP-compliant network is mapped to said first set of virtual hosts on the first firewall machine of the array to respond to a DNS request.

32.   (New) The load-sharing multi-homed firewall array of claim 30, wherein a connection request received from the private network is mapped to said second set of virtual hosts on the first firewall machine of the array to respond to a DNS request.

33.   (New) The load-sharing multi-homed firewall array of claim 30, wherein each of said firewall machines further comprises a special-purpose virtual host including an HTML-based configuration module for updating said master configuration files over said IP-compliant network.

34.   (New) The load-sharing multi-homed firewall array of claim 33, wherein each of said firewall machines includes N + 1 sets of virtual hosts.

35. (New) A load-sharing multi-homed firewall array comprising:

means for coupling a plurality of firewall means in parallel with an IP-compliant network;

wherein each of said firewall means comprising:

a first set of virtual host means interfacing an associated firewall means with said IP-compliant network and said second set of virtual host means interfacing an associated firewall means with a private network;

means for providing DNS functionality associated with each of firewall means;

master configuration means associated with each of the firewall machines;

HTML-based configuration means for updating said master configuration means over said IP-compliant network; and

means for mapping an ensuing connection request to the first firewall means to respond to a DNS request associated with said ensuing connection request.

36. (New) The load-sharing multi-homed firewall array of claim 35, further comprising means for mapping a connection request received from the IP-compliant network to said first set of virtual host means on the first firewall means to respond to a DNS request.

37. (New) The load-sharing multi-homed firewall array of claim 35, further comprising means for mapping a connection request received from the private network to said second set of virtual host means on the first firewall means to respond to a DNS request.

38.	(New) The load-sharing multi-homed firewall array of claim 35, wherein each of said firewall means includes N + 1 sets of virtual host means.